ONCE BOUGHT, ALWAYS BOUGHT.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 310.] FOR WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 8, 1894. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

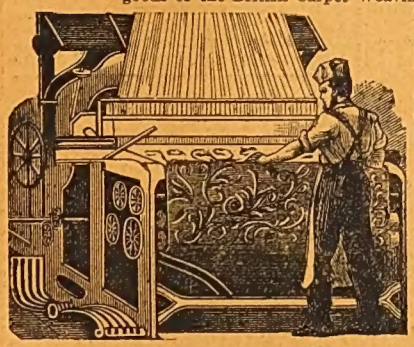
IF YOU INTEND TO BUY

Buy New Carpets at the Price of Old.

It would be ridiculous to buy old carpets, old designs, shop-worn, out-of-date goods, when you can purchase a stylish GENUINE, WOVEN, REVERSIBLE TRIUMPH CARPET suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., for

4/- Each. **4s. Postal Order or 50 Stamps,** **4/- Each.**

handsomely bordered and woven in fifty different patterns and colourings, to suit all requirements, and LARGE ENOUGH TO COVER ANY ORDINARY-SIZED ROOM. These Carpets will be sold as an advertisement for the goods of the British Carpet Weaving Company, below the actual cost of production. Thousands have already been sold at almost double above prices.



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SPECIAL OFFER—Two Carpets and Two Rugs for 9s. 6d.; Four Carpets and Four Rugs for 18s.; Eight Carpets and Eight Rugs for 35s.

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The *Queen* says: "Decidedly stouter and handsomer than any of the kind, the price being the astounding part of the matter." *Schoolmistress:* "For style, durability, and cheapness they cannot be beaten." *Penny Illustrated Paper:* "Manufactured in every variety of colour, and is one of the most surprising bargains I have seen." *Church Bells:* "Truly wonderful value."

Hundreds of unsolicited testimonials are being received from delighted purchasers who have had these carpets in use for years.

Stafford Road Post Office, Wolverhampton. M. A. Dudley, writes:—"Having purchased two of your Carpets between three and four years ago, I am thoroughly satisfied, and have recommended them to several people, who I know have tried them, and are equally satisfied."

65, Abbey Street, Nuneaton, Warwickshire. "Mrs. Bostock will thank the British Carpet Weaving Co. to send her one of their Carpets, for which she encloses postal order. She has had one of these Carpets in constant wear for some years now, and finds it the best wearing and cheapest carpet she can get."

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On receipt of this order form, and Postal Order or stamps, we guarantee to send any goods, as above, to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Money returned if not approved.
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permanently cured. A pamphlet giving sound practical advice, and full particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home-cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. F. W. Holt, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London. (Mention this paper.)

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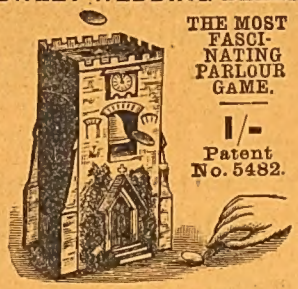

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£2 WEEKLY UPWARDS may be HONESTLY REALISED by persons of EITHER SEX, without hindrance to present occupation.

For Samples (returnable), &c., enclose addressed envelope to EVANS, WATTS & Co. (P 228), Merchants, Birmingham.—*This is genuine.*

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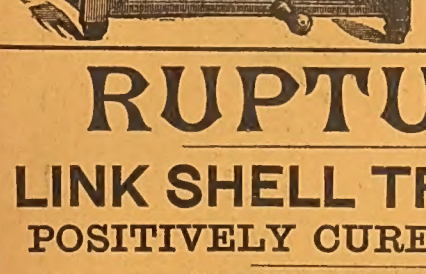
ONLY 4/- MONTHLY.



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permanently and absolutely by an entirely new and harmless self-treatment. Total destruction guaranteed. This marvellous remedy has never yet failed. Pamphlet, giving full particulars, sent on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. F. W. Holt, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London. (Mention this paper.)

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A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. S.," 67, Strand, London. Mention Short Stories.

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Especially to those who wish to know of a safe, certain, and speedy remedy for all irregularities and obstructions, a remedy which, under the most trying circumstances and in the most difficult and

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NEVER FAILS TO AFFORD RELIEF,

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No case hopeless, failure is simply impossible, as Mrs. Snow, of Denmark Hill, Camberwell, writes:—

"By adopting your treatment my anxiety and misery was over within twenty-four hours, although I had been daily taking pills and other things in vain. Half the quantity you sent proved effective, to my intense joy and surprise.

A sworn guarantee is enclosed with all testimonials and medicine, which is inexpensive, as one bottle at 4s. 6d. (by post, 4s. 9d.) is usually sufficient for any case.

Full particulars will be gladly forwarded to any lady on receipt of addressed envelope.

Write privately to—

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QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS and RELIEVE the distressing SYMPTOMS so prevalent with the sex. Boxes 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. (the latter size contains three times the quantity), of all Chemists, or will be sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 34 stamps, by the maker,

E. T. TOWLE, Chemist, NOTTINGHAM.

Beware of Imitations injurious and worthless.

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Mr. COLLINS [who was 30 years a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England], will forward free of Charge, full PARTICULARS of a REMEDY, which during an extensive practice both at home and in the Colonies, he has never known to fail in the most OBSTINATE CASES of OBSTRUCTION and IRREGULARITIES. Send addressed envelope for full particulars, and waste no more time and money on useless Pills and so-called Remedies, &c., which, in the majority of cases, are nothing but PURGATIVES, and cause SICKNESS, PROSTRATION, and PAIN, without having the desired effect.

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POSITIVELY CURES.—Vide *Lancet.*

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 310.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 8, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

My Cousin from the Bush

(This Story has been written up from the plot which secured the Prize in the recent Plot Competition.)

"RANDON GRANGE, SEDLEY,
"*August 25th*, 1892.

"MY DEAR FRANK,—I don't suppose there is any necessity for me or anyone else, to remind you you are due here on the 1st, and so I don't write this with that object, but simply to put the circumstances under which you are about to visit us plainly before you, so that there may be no mistakes or misunderstandings which might lead to unpleasantness and heartburnings hereafter. You know already that my niece and ward, and your cousin, Violet Lennox, has come back from Australia an orphan, and fairly well provided with pin-money, but not by any means rich or even what I daresay you would call well off; by this I mean to say that, matrimonially speaking, she is not a catch in the pecuniary light in which the business is looked at nowadays. As for herself, as I have told you already, she is a very pretty girl, well brought up, and well educated; in fact a girl that would do credit to any man's home. Having said this much I must now tell you of a rather curious provision in my father's will which puts me into an equally curious position with regard to this young lady. He left the Grange property and the bulk of his fortune to me as the elder son subject to two conditions. I was to pay my brother Tom an income of £800 a year out of the estate during his life or mine, and if I died childless, and he had children, the property was to go to his eldest child, who was to be my ward. This is why I have not been able to do as, if I had been a free agent, I should have done—make you my heir. I have left you what I could and that with the income which you are earning by your own talents and industry will, I think, make you pretty comfortable when I am gone.

"Now as I can't leave the property to you, and as the idea of any man not belonging to the old stock some day reigning over it is absolutely hateful to me, there is only one other way of getting out of the difficulty and keeping the property in the family: you must come down here and devote yourself seriously to the task of falling in love with your cousin, and bringing her in the same state of mind with regard to yourself. If you can do that everything will go well and as merrily as the marriage-bells which I hope to hear ringing for you at Randon before I die. I say 'must,' but, of course, my dear boy, you understand what that means, and also what I mean by writing this way to you. If you have already made your choice, or if there are any other reasons that make it impossible for you to fall in with my wishes, you have only to say so, and my little scheme must fall to the ground. I don't want you to make any mere marriage of convenience for my sake, so if you can't come heart-whole and prepared to fall in love on such provocation as Miss Violet may be pleased to give you, say so without hesitation, and either come as if you were paying an ordinary visit or put your visit off just as seems best to you; but, remember, whichever, course you take, I am always,

"Your affectionate uncle,
"PERCIVAL LENNOX.

"P.S.—The partridges are in splendid form and promising abundance, so if you do come you will have plenty of work for your gun."

This was the letter that I found waiting for me at my rooms in town on my return from a month's cruise in a friend's yacht round the Channel Islands and the coast of Brittany. To say the very least of it, it was an interesting communication for a man rising twenty-seven to receive from one of the best old uncle's that ever was blessed with a nephew.

To make one or two points rather more clear, I ought to say that I am the son of old Sir Percival's only sister who was disinherited by her father, whose fine old crusted Toryism had been irrevocably outraged by her marrying a clever and good-looking young civil engineer, instead of a brother baronet old enough to be her father who owned many broad acres in Blankshire adjoining the Lennox estate. It was for this reason that old Sir Ralph had so arranged matters in his will that the bulk of the fortune and the estate, which was unentailed, should be removed as far as possible from my mother and her childen.

I had followed in my father's professional footsteps, and thanks to his excellent training and the connection I inherited from him, I was quite independent of the Lennox estate even without the £500 a year which Sir Percival had allowed me since I came of age and which, as he had told me, he had secured to me by will out of the property that he had inherited from his mother. This was all he could do to repair the

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A slight, graceful figure seated on the driving-seat.

injustice which his father had done in his will. But now he evidently considered that the Fates had given him an opportunity of going into partnership with them, and playing the rôle of fairy godfather, by bringing the ill-natured intentions of his crusty old father to naught without doing injustice to anyone.

As for me, heart-whole and fancy free as I was, neither better nor worse than the average man of my class, the prospect, if a trifle out of the common was, I must confess, by no means an unpleasant one, and if any vague ideas about sacrificing myself and my bachelor freedom for the good of the old family, and the satisfaction of the best of uncles, flitted through my mind, the gentle glow of virtue to which they gave rise was made still more pleasant by the brief but satisfactory description that Sir Percival's letter gave of my unknown cousin from Australia.

I admit, also, that the eyes of an exceedingly virtuous person, who had never been subjected to the same temptation, might have seen a mercenary element in the intentions of a man deliberately making up his mind to, if possible, fall in love with a pretty cousin who had it in her power to make him master of a fine old estate which had been in his family for thirteen or fourteen generations. Possibly, too, if I had been the hero of a penny novelette, I should either have been already devoted to a fair and virtuous milliner's assistant, who was the sole support of her widowed mother and crippled sister, or else I should have replied to my good old uncle's letter in a strain of lofty and quite unnatural disinterestedness, and told him that not even broad acres or a pretty cousin, nor yet even both combined, could unbend that stiff-necked rectitude to which the mere suspicion of a marriage of convenience was utterly abhorrent.

As it was, being just an average professional man, whom his associates were wont to call somewhat hard-headed, I found the prospect by no means unpleasant. If my pretty cousin was as heart-whole as I was, then, other things being equal, I hadn't the slightest objection to getting into a suitable frame of mind for meeting the fate which was coming to me in such a pleasant guise. I didn't even wait to write. I just sat down and smoked one pipe over the letter, and then wired to Sir Percival—"Expect me thirty-first. Hope to be able to meet your wishes." And so the die was cast.

I concluded, of course, that Violet herself—I got to call her Violet in my soliloquies within five minutes after sending the telegram—would be in a state of blissful ignorance of the trap that was being so cunningly and so amiably laid for her unwary footsteps. This added a delightful element of uncertainty and almost of romance to the situation. Granted that I went down to Randon ready to melt into that mentally flaccid condition known as being in love at her first smile, would she believe that I had fallen in love at first sight, or only think that I was making a fool of myself?

If I was too precipitate she might think that I was just making use of her for purposes of amusement; if I was too tardy, Sir Percival might think I was playing him false, and then, worse than all, there was the danger that I might go and see and be conquered in all honesty of purpose, while she might enjoy the fun of bringing me to her feet only to tell me in the end that she could never be anything more to me than a cousin. Evidently the situation that I was about to face was one in which it behoved me to walk with wary feet and with open eyes. Although I have only the average allowance of sentiment, I am not ashamed to admit that I dreamt of her every night, and that my dreams invested her with such a pleasant personality that as the train slowed down to run into the little station at Randon, my usually well-regulated heart was actually beating fourteen and fifteen to the dozen. One of my uncle's men was on the platform and came forward to open the door, touching his hat as the train stopped.

"Morning, sir!" he said as I alighted. "Glad to see you again, sir. Sir Percival's compliments, and he hopes you'll excuse him coming down to meet you as his foot's been giving him a bit of trouble lately and he's saving himself up for to-morrow. Miss Violet's drove over for you in the dog-cart and the bay mare. Rare whip she is, too, sir. Drives as if she'd been born to it. Learnt it in *Horse*tralia, I suppose."

"Very probably, Thomson," I said rather jerkily. "How long have you been thinking of that joke?"

"Joke, sir? No, sir—fact I can assure you," replied the worthy Thomson with a stolidly puzzled look on his well-trained features. "Young lady drives uncommon well. Might have been born with ribbons in her hand."

"Might she, really!" I said, looking rather anxiously to where the well-known dog-cart and bay mare stood on the other side of the low, white palings. "Well, then, take my Gladstone and tell them to send the rest of the luggage up and I'll go and introduce myself."

I believe I did introduce myself in something like proper form, but all I remember of the ceremony is a vision of a slight, graceful figure seated on the driving-seat, a pair of soft laughing brown eyes looking down from under a broad-brimmed and pleasantly unfashionable hat, and the firm clasp of a strong little hand gloved to perfection. It was about two miles and a half to the Grange and I remember that we got there in an absurdly short space of time. Dear old Sir Percival met us on the doorstep, and when Violet disappeared to take off her hat he took me into the breakfast-room and, putting his hand on my shoulder, looked inquiringly at me and said:

"Well, my boy, you are looking very well, but a trifle flushed. It isn't very hot out of doors, is it?"

"Oh, no; it's cool enough," I said laughing, perhaps a trifle nervously; "but the fact of it is I'm afraid I'm in for an attack of heart disease, and that affects the circulation you know."

"Eh? What? Heart disease! Hang it all, my boy, you don't mean that, surely? Eh? Oh, you young rascal, that's it, is it? You caught it between here and the station, did you? Well, I can't say I hope you'll get better. In fact, I tell you plainly I shall be disappointed if you don't get worse. But, come now, frankly, what do you think of her?"

"I haven't thought at all yet, uncle. She hasn't given me time to. It really seems quite too good to be true—that is, of course, if she——"

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"Ah, yes, of course," interrupted the old gentleman. "That's the unknown quantity you've got to find out. As far as I have been able to see, there is no one else in the question, so you've got a clear course before you. You're riding to win, and you must make the running. But now is there anything you want to ask me before the campaign begins?"

"It has begun," I said, in so serious a voice that I laughed at myself the next minute, "and the first shot has gone very much home; but I should like to know whether or not Miss Lennox has any idea, well, that my visit here has any other object than the slaughter of partridges."

"Certainly not," said Sir Percival. "I'm rather too old a hand to scare the game in that way. Violet knew that she had a cousin who comes here to shoot every year, and that you were coming this year. And that's all she knew. I have carefully refrained singing your praises or doing anything that might prejudice her against you, and from her conversation I shouldn't even think that her poor father had told her anything very definite about her actual position here. She knows, of course, that she is my ward, and as such has expectations, but I think that's all, so if the conspiracy isn't a brilliant success I'm afraid you'll have nobody but yourself to thank for it."

"There shall be no failure if I can help it, I can tell you," I replied. "Quite apart from external reasons, for if she hadn't a penny in the world I should consider myself a fool not to try and win her now I've seen her."

"A very satisfactory sentiment," said Sir Percival with a chuckle, "especially as matters stand. Now be off and wash your hands and shake down into your room. Lunch will be ready in half an hour."

There is not the slightest necessity for me to dwell on the various stages by which I reached the point I knew I was destined for, as soon as I had set eyes on the fair face of my cousin Violet; nor yet need I expatiate, as I could very easily do, on the mental and physical charms which so speedily reduced me to a state of helpless, but by no means unpleasant slavery. I went to bed the first night with aggravated symptoms, and I got up worse, and naturally the longer the aggravating cause continued to act the more serious became the symptoms of the malady which was its effect.

What made matters still more serious for me was the fact that for the life of me I couldn't tell whether or not there was any chance of the only possible cure being applied. Violet was as tantalising as she was delightful; two qualities by no means infrequently found in a girl who is at once very pretty and very "nice," and knows it. She was everything that was pleasant and kind and cousinly, but after I had been living under the same roof with her for a fortnight, I was forced to confess to Sir Percival that I had not the slightest reason to believe myself in any degree favoured beyond other men.

Professional matters, meanwhile, made my return to town necessary, and I had to say good-bye to Violet until Christmas. The night before my departure Sir Percival managed to arrange matters so that Violet and I were the sole occupants of the drawing-room just after dinner.

I felt that my time had come. Unless I was to make a complete fool of myself and grievously disappoint my excellent old uncle, I must say something, and that to the point. Not a formal declaration and proposal, for to do that after only a fortnight's acquaintance would be to give my beloved the enemy a loophole of escape which I didn't propose to leave open, and so, taking advantage, with what skill my inward agitation permitted, of a somewhat formal expression of regret at my departure, and a hope that we should meet again at Christmas, I screwed my courage up to the sticking point and told her in so many words that my coming depended entirely upon the kind of welcome I might expect from her. Of course, she saw my meaning at a glance, and you may imagine my feelings when I saw just the faintest perceptible flush creep up into her bonny cheeks and heard her say:—

"Glad to see you again? Yes, of course I shall be! Perhaps even just a tiny bit more glad than I was to see you this time. Now if you don't mind we'll change the subject till——"

"Till Christmas," I said, looking her in the eyes and holding out my hand.

Her eyes dropped suddenly, and I felt her hand tremble ever so little as she put it into mine. I never made so great an effort in my life as I did then to keep from picking her up in my arms and kissing her, and taking all the rest for granted, and if I had known how long the three months or so between then and Christmas were going to be I believe I should have done so, and risked the consequences.

However, Christmas came in due course, and my welcome was so far satisfactory that I felt pretty certain I should go back to town a doomed man; in fact, I determined to let the shortest interval compatible with decency elapse before making finally certain of my fate. Still the course of true love never does run quite smooth, although one would have thought that in our case every possible precaution had been taken to make it do so.

One night two or three days after my arrival I happened to be coming back from a lonely stroll in the park, a stroll which I had, in fact, taken for the sole purpose of arranging with myself the time, place, and terms of the declaration that was to finally settle my fate, when I happened to glance in through the window of the dining-room. The lights were lit and the table was laid, but the blinds had not been drawn down, and so I could see everything in the room distinctly.

I stopped for a moment admiring the contrast between the cosy lighted room and the bleakness of the leafless park sprinkled here and there with patches of the newly fallen snow, and, as I stood looking in, the door opened and Violet came in shutting it behind her. I went nearer to the window to get a

She took up the decanter.

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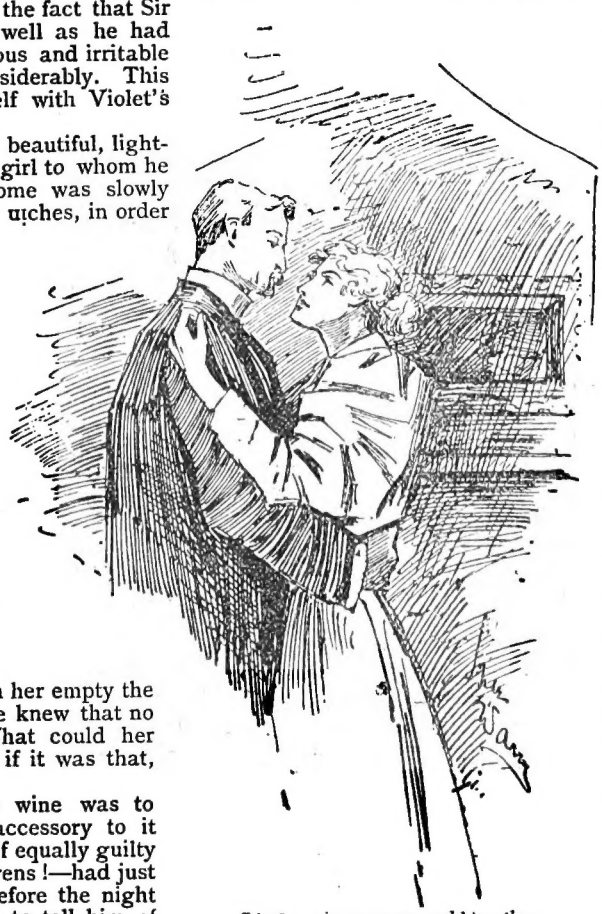
better view of her, half intending to open the French window and surprise her, but before I had taken half-a-dozen strides I stopped rooted to the ground with sudden horror at what I saw.

Violet, after carefully closing the door behind her and taking, as I thought, a hurried glance round the room, went to my uncle's seat at the head of the table, and taking the stopper out of a little decanter filled with a very special brown sherry that he kept for his exclusive use, emptied into it the contents of a little white paper that she held in her hand; then she took up the decanter, shook it gently, looking to see if what she had put in was dissolved, then set it down again and left the room.

What was I to think, and, still worse, what was I to do after making such a discovery as this? No one is so suspicious as a man in love, unless, perhaps, a woman in the same state. Instantly a crowd of terrible thoughts swarmed into my brain. I remembered being struck with the fact that Sir Percival was by no means as well as he had been in September; he was nervous and irritable and seemed to have lost flesh considerably. This change instantly connected itself with Violet's more than suspicious action.

Could it be possible that this beautiful, light-hearted, and seemingly innocent girl to whom he had given the shelter of his home was slowly poisoning him, murdering him by inches, in order that she might come into the inheritance of which I now felt convinced her father must have told her? Could it be possible that she thought the probable remainder of his life too long a period to wait for what she knew would one day be hers, and that, therefore, she was staining her soul with this hideous crime in order to hasten the end?



I took him in my arms and kissed her.

And if this was so, might she not have another motive, might she not have some penniless lover, nay, even a husband, out yonder in the Australian bush for whose sake she was guiltily anticipating the course of Nature? It seemed too monstrous, too horrible to believe, and yet, what was I to think? Had I not seen her empty the paper into my uncle's wine! She knew that no one but himself drank it. What could her motive be if not the worst, and if it was that, what was I to do?

To let Sir Percival drink the wine was to connive at his murder, to be accessory to it before the fact, and make myself equally guilty with the girl whom I—good heavens!—had just resolved to ask to be my wife before the night was over. More than that, not to tell him of what I had seen would be to leave him unwarned and unprotected at the mercy of a murderess, while to tell him would be to give him such a shock as might complete the work that she had begun.

In a perfect agony of rage and perplexity, I let myself in at the side door with my latch-key, and went straight to the dining-room. Happily I met no one either going or coming, and when I got up to my room I had the decanter of sherry with me. I had just time left to dress for dinner, and I scrambled out of one set of clothes and into the other, hardly knowing what I was doing.

When I got downstairs again, the first thing I heard was Sir Percival rating his butler soundly for forgetting his sherry. The man protested that he had put it on the table as usual, and this made Sir Percival worse. I got into the dining-room just as he was calling him a liar, and telling him to go and fetch it at once.

At this moment Violet also came into the room, looking as pretty and self-possessed and perfectly dressed as ever. But when Sir Percival, after sending the discomforted butler out of the room, explained what was the matter, my suspicion-quickened eyes saw her start slightly, and, as I thought, turn pale. Sir Percival was too angry to notice it, but to me it was only an added proof of the fearful suspicion that was now fast becoming a conviction.

How I got through that evening I hardly know. All I do know is that I watched everything that my uncle ate and drank in fear and trembling, wondering whether the sherry was the only thing that the beautiful wretch who sat at his table had put her secret poison into. As for her, after the first shock she seemed to at once recover her spirits and, if possible, increased my new-born horror of her by rallying me on my own manifest low spirits and absent-mindedness.

By the time I went to bed, I had decided what to do, and as soon as it was light the next morning, I was up and round at the stables with my spirit flask full of the poisoned sherry. As soon as my horse was ready, I rode off post haste to my uncle's doctor, who lived on the other side of the village about four miles away. I caught him just as he was sitting down to breakfast, and as soon as I was alone with him in his surgery I gave him the flask of sherry, and, without any explanations, asked him to analyse it.

"May I ask where you got this sherry, Mr. Burton?" he said, sniffing at it, and looking at me with a curious twinkle in his eye.

"Got it!" I said. "Well, to tell you the truth, doctor, if you'll excuse me, I would rather not say anything about that until you have analysed it. The circumstances are so painful and to me so distressing that——"

"Ah!" said the doctor. "I thought so. Very creditable to you, Mr. Burton, considering that you, no doubt, have suspicions which must be very terrible to you. Well, you may thank your stars you have taken the sensible course you have done in coming to me first, for I presume you have said nothing to anyone else."

"No," I replied. "My suspicions are horrible enough and distressing enough, God knows, but I have kept them to myself."

"Good!" said the doctor, brightening up in a way that almost disgusted me for the moment. "Then I can tell you what this sherry contains without analysing it. It contains strychnia——"

"Ah!" I exclaimed, recoiling a step. "Strychnia!"

"Yes," replied the doctor calmly raising the flask to his lips and taking a pull. "It contains strychnia, nux vomica, and carbonate of iron, in medicinal doses, as prescribed by myself for your worthy uncle who, I regret to say, has not only been in a very low state of health lately, but has also unhappily become a convert to homeopathy, and has sworn that he will never speak to me again if I ever attempt to dose him with the orthodox abominations of the pharmacopœia. This being the case you see——."

"All right, doctor, I see," I interrupted, snatching the flask from his hand and flinging it under the fireplace as though it were something accursed. "I see quite enough to show me that, in addition to being one of the greatest fools on earth, I have entertained the most horrible and the most miserably false suspicions about—good heavens! no, it would

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be sacrilege even to speak of her in such a connection now. I shall never be able to look her in the face again. I shall be off to town to-day."

"No, you won't," interrupted the doctor. "Not unless you really want to make yourself the fool you have just called yourself. I suppose you saw Miss Violet putting this stuff into your uncle's sherry. Of course, it was very unfortunate that you should have seen her doing anything that looked so curiously suspicious, and, grave and all as your suspicions were, you were quite right according to your lights in doing what you have done, but there the matter begins and ends. No one but you and I know anything about it, and all the harm done is that Sir Percival has missed one of his doses.

"If you'll wait five minutes I'll put up half-a-dozen more and you can take them to Miss Violet and ask her from me to put them into your uncle's sherry according to directions, as before. After that you may perform any penance that your remorse may suggest; but if I were you I wouldn't tell her anything about it just yet. Wait till you've been married a few months and then you may have a good laugh over it. By the way, should I be taking too great a liberty if I asked whether the happy day has been fixed yet."

"No," I said; "but unless I have all the bad luck that I deserve, it very soon will be."

I couldn't find courage to follow the doctor's advice until Violet had been Mrs. Burton for nearly six months. When I at last did tell her she heard me to the end in stony silence, and then she raised her eyes and looked at me and said very seriously:

"You great goose! Is *that* what you've been burdening your mind with all this time? Why, do you suppose I didn't suspect it was you all the time who took the sherry away? I knew you were outside the window, for I saw your shadow on the snow, and I also knew of that mysterious visit of yours to the doctor's the next morning. I felt very miserable and very angry that night I can tell you, but I comforted myself with the reflection that you must be just as bad, and that you must have felt a good deal too small for your clothes as you rode home from the doctor's, so I forgave you."

"Yes," I said, as I took her in my arms and kissed her now laughing lips. "If ever a self-respecting man felt cheap enough to be given away with a pound of tea it was my miserable self riding home to breakfast from the doctor's that morning."

THE GREATEST SACRIFICE OF ALL.

TING-A-LING! Ting-a-ling! the convent bells were ringing. Ting-a-ling! ting-a-ling! came the sweet sounds from the high white cupola. They floated far away out on the warm summer air, fragrant with the smell of Indian hay, or *Foin Sauvage*, that the "habitants" were cutting in the meadow by the river.

In the distance, the tin roofs of the old French Canadian city glittered in the sunshine, and the great river shone like gold as it glided on majestically to the waters of the Gulf.

The convent lay in its own grounds, carefully guarded by high stone walls, though a good many came in and out of its portals, as it was the "Providence" of the neighbourhood, and welcomed the little orphaned ones and the sick and the aged poor of the district. The sunlight filtered through the whole building. It fell in slanting lines in the long passages, with their rush-bottomed chairs and spotlessly-scrubbed floors.

Sister St. Stéphanie sat at her desk, and she was tired. It had been a long hot day, and the children had not been attentive. The room was empty now, for its little occupants, in their checked blue pinafores and thick shoes, had all been dismissed into the garden for the welcome play before the evening meal. Now she was free to walk in the garden for a little while.

Sister St. Stéphanie was not as young as she was once, and her figure was portly—but, in spite of the lines that come at fifty, it was a face that had been most charming in the spring-time of her life.

She knelt a few minutes at the little oratory on the stairway, and then, quietly crossing herself, went down the wide verandah steps to the garden. Sister St. Mary Clopas was with the children, who were wending their way to the little spruce wood by the big meadows; so, free from her responsibilities, the nun took the path to the kitchen garden.

It was pleasant here on the lovely summer afternoons, and a look of sweet content came into the nun's face as, folding her hands within her wide sleeves, she paced quietly up and down the path. From the river came the breeze, laden with incense of the long swaths of hay.

How familiar was that odour to Sister St. Stéphanie. It carried her back thirty years, long years, when she was only sixteen years old. She was not called Sister St. Stéphanie then, but was Gabrielle St. Pierre, the youngest daughter of the respectable merchant of the little village of Sainte Priscelle.

The St. Pierres lived in an old steep-roofed house on the banks of the Ottawa. Gabrielle's father and mother were old people, and she was the child of his second marriage, and there were long years between her two elder sisters and herself.

Little Gabrielle was a happy, restless child. Her hair was blue black, but it had many little ripples in it. Her eyes were big and brown, with a soft, pathetic light in them like the deer in the fir woods, and the flush on her cheek like the wild rose that blossoms on the dusty highway.

At eleven years of age, she went to a great convent near Montreal, and she was happy and learnt many things—to write a delicate copper-plate hand, to play very sweetly on the piano, and to do endless and gorgeous pieces of wool-work. Her voice, clear and fresh, was an important factor in the convent choir.

The nuns loved her well, and little Gabrielle was content that her lot should be cast with theirs one day. For the St. Pierres had always given, when possible, a son or daughter in each generation to the Church. So she accepted this career with the same sweet docility with which she had accepted the dresses they sent her, or the studies they desired her to pursue.

At seventeen, she came home for a little while, and for a time the life she led was peaceful enough. But one day, as M. St. Pierre sat in his shop reading his small weekly paper, while his mild young apprentice attended to the wants of the few customers, a stranger came in. He was young, perhaps twenty-three or four, tall and straight, with curly yellow hair and big blue eyes that had almost an infantine look of innocence. He came up to the fat merchant and asked him, in very tolerable French, where he could get lodgings in the village, as he wanted to fish in the St. Andre River, where the big pink trout gambolled up and down the foaming brown water.

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As M. St. Pierre gazed at the wonderful jointed fishing-rods and new leather gun cases that a humble "habitant" brought in just then, he thought of the good dollars they represented and wondered why the stranger should not occupy the large empty room in his house.

. . . . . .

That afternoon Mr. Jack arrived with his trunks, dogs, gun-cases, and fishing-rods, and the dark old house seemed to wake up from that time. He took his meals with the family, and his sunny smiles, his merry laugh, and his broken French even drew smiles from quiet and faded Madame St. Pierre.

But to Gabrielle he did not say much. She was too shy. She came in the evening he arrived; she did not know anyone was there beyond the usual family circle. How pretty she looked in a pink cotton dress and her long braids hanging down her back, and the brown eyes under her curled lashes.

"Where have you been, my daughter?" said her mother, as she poured out the tea in the thick handleless white cups.

"I have been decorating the church for the Feast of St. John," said the young girl in her pretty French. Her tones were low and clear. How delicious, thought Jack to himself, and how mediæval.

The house was full of noise now. Such barking of dogs and chattering of various Canadians, who were good "voyageurs" and knew the woods well, and came to guide the young fellow in his expeditions after trout or bears.

After a time Gabrielle got to look for his coming and to find the day so long when he was away. Unknown to herself, the child-heart that was slumbering woke up to find itself that of a woman glowing with its first deep, entrancing love; so little does it take to make this change. One or two little strolls in the garden in the evening, the discussion of an illustrated paper, the few words spoken at meal times. Naturally it was all very restricted, for a young French girl has not much liberty; but her smile was sweeter for him and he could make her laugh.

So the stranger stayed on till the late August days. He was out fishing all the last morning, but he came into the garden to bid Gabrielle good-bye. Jack knew where she would be, and he went to the end of the garden, where some willows grew beside a spring, and there was a little seat and some beehives. Gabrielle was sitting there, with a little shawl over her head.

"I came to say good-bye, mademoiselle," said Jack; "I knew where I should find you. You hid yourself, but I could not go without seeing you."

He was going then, and the beautiful brown eyes, in spite of herself, filled with hot tears. There was a moment of silence, and Jack suddenly bent forward and took the slender hand, roughened with work, in his. She tried to draw it away, but he held it fast. The autumn sunlight fell on him as he stood there, with the dim old house behind him.

"Oh, Monsieur Jack, you must not," she said trembling, drawing her hand away.

"But Gabrielle," said Jack hurriedly, "are you not sorry I am going away? I hate to go," he said, speaking breathlessly in his emotion, "for I have learned to love you so much."

She was trembling like a leaf now, but she turned her dear eyes to him, and there the answer was written so plainly.

"Darling," said Jack, as the long whistle of the steamer was heard coming round the point, "say one little word, for I must run to catch the boat. You love me, don't you, dear little Gabrielle? Say my name just once."

"Yes, ah, yes, Jack," came the answer, almost in a whisper—how sweetly she said the word "Jack."

Nearer and nearer came the throb of the paddle-wheels of the steamer. Jack bent forward and raised the cold little hand to his lips, and kissed it so tenderly and lovingly. Until he told of his love, he did not know its deep and overwhelming tide.

"I will write," he said, looking back at the girlish figure and beautiful young face, so full of love for him.

He went down the short path to the wharf, holding his hat in his hand and smiling on her, though there was a graver and more earnest look on the merry young face than had ever been there before.

The sound of the paddle-wheels stopped for a few minutes, then went on again, grew fainter, fainter, till all was quiet. The sun had set, and Gabrielle went into the house.

The brilliant autumn passed, and then the long winter came, and for some time Gabrielle lived in a dream—a dream known only to herself. But she never got a letter. Jack had written, but M. St. Pierre had opened his letters without scruple, and, thinking they were only the effusions of a boyish love affair, said nothing about them to Gabrielle. Her thoughts were otherwise employed. When the letters became more frequent, and glowing with a manly love that the old man could in no way misconstrue, he thought it time to interfere, and confided in Madame St. Pierre. She was overwhelmed with the perfidy of Gabrielle, and there was a consultation with M. le Curé.

Poor little Gabrielle was called in, and the storm burst upon her, terrible in all its fierceness. She, promised to the Church, had been deceitful and underhand! She had spent the summer, as no modest girl should, in covert interviews with a heretic! She, whom they thought so pure and good and open as the day, had made all sorts of promises to this light-of-love.

Gabrielle said not a word, only grew whiter and whiter, and looked with terror at them. M. le Curé was kinder than her father and mother, for he said quietly:

"I know Gabrielle of old; leave her to herself for reflection. The good God in His mercy will bring her to a better mind. The saints also have been woefully tempted."

And Gabrielle looked at him gratefully, and when her father and mother asked her if she had anything to say, she murmured with white lips, "No, no;" and crept upstairs to the little cold room, where the frost drew beautiful ferns and palms on its many-paned windows, and sat in dumb agony by her bed. All the light of life seemed gone out.

M. le Curé, who had been her good friend before, spoke to her rarely, and then with a subdued sadness that was more keen than wrath. So Lent passed, and it was nearly Easter.

Tempted by the sunshine, Gabrielle went out into the garden to the little seat by the beehives, where she had seen him last. There was a strange agony of pleasure in doing this. Gabrielle sat with her hands folded, looking at the great wide river rolling on, with now and then a block of ice on its black surface. How well she remembered the stroke of the paddle-wheels which had borne him away.

There was a click at the gate, and M. le Curé came slowly down the path.

"My child," he said gently, "you are in great misery. Let me talk to you, let me help you."

At these words of unexpected kindness, the tears rose to Gabrielle's eyes, and her lips trembled. The wind blew M. le Cure's long grey hair from his forehead and waved the worn black soutane.

"My child," he said, his deep voice full of emotion, "could I but show you a place of peace, a place of rest! What would you say if I told you I too have suffered as you do, and conquered and gained an infinite peace, an infinite glory! The struggle was bitter—yea, even to death. Think, think of the glory and beauty reserved for those who have given up father, mother, child, yea, lover too, for God!

"My child, let me comfort you," he continued, his rugged face lighting up with enthusiasm. "It is near the holy Eastertide; come, cast thyself at the foot of the Cross and bring thy sorrows to Him who suffered all. Oh, come to thy Easter Communion as the Bride of Christ, and oh, the greater the temptation, the greater the triumph! This trial is the furnace of thy life. Come through it in His strength, and what joy will be thine!"

He left her, passing swiftly down the garden path.

The stern priest had struck a different chord. He had not taunted her and upbraided her. The girl's heart was so weary, so weary! Perhaps he spoke truly. She stood in deep thought under the willow, then turned suddenly, went swiftly through the gate and across the grassy open plot into the church.

Gabrielle went quickly over to the altar, all draped in black, where the big plaster groups of the Entombment stood, and

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knelt there long and still. It grew quite dark, and the sacristan stood clinking his keys to arrest her attention.

When Gabrielle entered the house supper was ready. The family ate almost in silence, and then, at the bidding of Madame St. Pierre, sank on their knees before the plain black crucifix on the wall.

When they arose from their knees Gabrielle left the room. Marie, her faithful waiting-maid, followed her into the hall and slipped a note into her hand. No one saw this little incident, but Gabrielle's heart gave a great leap, and she fled up to her room and shut the door tight, bolting it to make it secure. Then she looked at the letter.

It was square and white, with firm black writing on it. So unlike the letters they generally received—cheap yellow envelopes with thin scratchy writing on them in pale ink. She opened it quickly, and the words burnt themselves on her brain:

"My own Darling.—Why have you never written one word to me? I have written again and again, giving the address carefully each time, and have never had a single line. I know there is something underhand going on. But, dear one, I am quite near you. Marie has told me what you have been enduring. I shall be at the landing down by the river at ten. Come, as you love me, my own poor little darling.—Your most loving, "JACK."

"I shall be at the landing down at the river at ten." Had she gone mad, and was she dreaming? She would see his face once more. Gabrielle held the letter in her hand a few minutes. Remember, it was her first love letter. She gently passed her hand over the lifeless thing. Then, holding it over the candle, burnt it deliberately, till it curled in blackened scrolls on the floor, where it seemed to writhe in torture like a living thing.

Presently the old clock struck ten, and getting up she slipped quietly down the stairs. How they creaked! The door by which she must leave the house was not locked, as Marie had purposely seen that it was left unfastened.

Gabrielle sped down the path, light and sure of foot. It was bright moonlight, and the great elm trees cast black shadows on the silver water, and their roots looked like twisted snakes. By the biggest elm, Jack was standing. Yes, Jack, and the moonlight fell on his light hair, making almost an aureole about his head.

"Oh, Heaven! help me to be firm in this time of need. I am so weak, so weak," Gabrielle prayed.

Jack gave a sudden leap.

"Gabrielle! Gabrielle!" he said, coming forward with arms outstretched. How beautiful he was with the love-light in his eyes.

"No, Jack, you may not kiss me," said Gabrielle in such a sad, sad tone. "It is all, all over for ever."

"You are mad, Gabrielle," said Jack, looking at her in amazement; "they have turned your mind with their bigoted cruelty. Oh, I do not believe you!

"Come with me, darling," he said, so tenderly, so gently, "away from this death in life. Dear one, in my love you will find all this false reasoning disappear like a bad dream. My poor little persecuted one! Come, come to-night on the steamer. I know the stewardess on the boat; she is a kind, good woman, and will take care of you till we get to Carrillon, and then we will be married by the rector of the English church, and in your church, too. It will be so simple, darling, dear one. Speak, speak, Gabrielle!" he said, his voice trembling in his great agitation.

"Do not say more, Jack," she said, her voice sunk almost to a whisper; "my temptation is bitter enough. It cannot, cannot be. I will never marry you—you will never understand—never, never!"

Jack was getting very angry now. But, as he looked at the slight little figure, so frail, so scrupulously neat in its old-fashioned grey dress, the anger melted and pity came instead. He drew near her, and sinking his voice to its sweetest, gentlest tones, almost as a mother might speak to a suffering child, in accents to move the coldest heart:

"Darling, have pity on me—I who have hungered and thirsted for you day and night, who have written so patiently and been so deceived. Let me plead with your father, or come now, now with me. Your life will be so bright, my people are kind and good hearted. Oh, Gabrielle, Gabrielle darling; come, come let me shelter you in my love. Have you ceased to love me?" He looked pale now, and so wistful.

Gabrielle seemed to swallow something, and then her voice rang out clear and firm, with a note of exultation:

"Oh, dear one! You will never understand. It is not my father or mother, or the priest who prevents me now. At first they did, but now it is of my own free will. I will give myself to the Church. You will never know the agony I have passed through, but I have been helped. Do you not think my soul yearned for your love? But it may not be. That is the best life had to offer, and that is my sacrifice to God!"

And turning swiftly to Jack, her face almost supernatural in its calm and beauty, she raised her hand:

"May the good God bless and keep you evermore, evermore! Adieu, beloved, adieu." And she fled swiftly up the hill.

Poor benighted little Gabrielle, we say. But we may say that of all those who have suffered for their faith in the course of ages. She had only lived up to her ideal, after all.

Gabrielle crept up to her little room and fell upon the floor unconscious. Nature cannot bear too great a strain. The mice crept fearlessly about, undisturbed by the silent figure. None knew of what had happened that night—only M. le Curé, and he was a man who spoke seldom.

And Jack, you may read his name again among those who belong to the great commercial interests of the world. He is a good man and well known. Yes, he is married and has sons at college and in business. But he, too, may have his memories for all we know. His purse is always open to good causes, he gives abundantly to "those excellent women," as he calls the Sisters of Charity.

But all this is so long ago, thirty-seven years or more, and time is very merciful. Sister St. Stéphanie knows great peace and love in her busy life. The little ones love her, and trot after her, holding withered little bunches of flowers in their hot chubby hands, and the old people pour out their garrulous troubles in her willing ear.

Ting-a-ling! ting-a-ling! the convent bell is ringing for the children's supper; and Sister St. Stéphanie must go in now. The waggons are coming up from the long meadows laden with new cut hay.

Ah, me! what memories the Indian grass that grows by the great river will always bring back to her in the bright Canadian summer-time.

PEARSON'S LIBRARY

Has been so well received on all hands that the editor has felt that a special effort should be made to make it more widely known and ensure an even greater success.

He is therefore adopting a novel method of advertisement, in which the readers of SHORT STORIES will be invited to participate. A special edition of 100,000 copies of the first issue of "A Girl Without a Name" has been printed. These copies are to be given away to the first 100,000 readers of SHORT STORIES, or the other papers issued from this office, who apply. All that you have to do is to forward your application to the editor of *Pearson's Library*, Henrietta-street, London, W.C., enclosing a fully addressed wrapper stamped with 1½d. in stamps, to defray the cost of postage, and a copy of the first novel will be sent you by return.

Not only this, but commencing with No. 4, which is published on January 1st, and will be entitled "The Strange Wooing of Mary Bowler," the size of the novel will be increased by thirty-two pages, with a proportionate addition to the length of the story and the number of illustrations.

No. 3, entitled "Thro' the Battle Smoke," with over 100 Illustrations by Messrs. A. Kemp Tebby and Raymond Potter. *Now on Sale.*

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," etc.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

Franz Hartog—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

Sir Harry Milton—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, in his yacht, the *Calypso*, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

Herbert Wyndham—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

Frederick Austen—the inventor of the air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

Frank Markham—the young captain of the Utopian yacht, *Mermaid*.

Violet Milton—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is terribly injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

Dora Merton—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

Lucy Summers—another fair Utopian.

Renault in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and Hartog in the torpedo-boat *Destroyer*, levy blackmail on the high seas. Just as they have annihilated a combined British, French, and Portuguese fleet sent to discover them, a Maxim aeroplane, the *Britannia*, comes on the scene, and is captured by the *Vengeur*. Those on it are put ashore, and one of the crew shoots at Renault and wounds him. A few weeks later Renault and Hartog set out for the island of Utopia for the purpose of destroying its inhabitants, but find it deserted. On the discovery of Renault's treachery, the whole colony had gone back to England, Wyndham, together with Adams, Austen, Sir Harry, and his sister Violet, travelling in the *Nautilus*, a newly-built torpedo-boat of great speed, which, while coming up the English Channel, is challenged by a British cruiser.

CHAPTER XXV.

News of War.

As the answering signal was flashed from the warship's search-light, the *Nautilus* slowed down to ten knots and swung round to port, describing a three-quarter curve which brought her alongside a large, grey-painted armoured cruiser which, with her attendant brace of torpedo boats, was cruising under easy steam about six miles from the land.

As the *Nautilus*, with nothing of her showing above the water except her platform and conning-tower, and an expanse of plated turtle-back deck fore and aft of it, and with no funnels, and, consequently, no smoke or steam issuing from any part of her, ran up alongside the cruiser, all who were on the deck of the British vessel crowded to the bulwarks and portholes, and up into the rigging, to get a closer view of the strange craft.

The captain himself was at the gangway as she came alongside, looking with no less curious eyes than anyone else at this strange visitor, which seemed the nearest approach to an actual submarine vessel that he had ever heard of. By the time the gangway steps had been reached Wyndham had come on deck dressed in his uniform as a Lieutenant of the Fleet, and returned the salute with which Her Majesty's cloth was immediately recognised.

"What craft is that, and where do you come from?" asked the commander of the cruiser. "And how long have you been in commission? I never heard of a thing like that in the Navy. Who are you?"

"Well, sir, I'm Herbert Wyndham, late Lieutenant of the *Sandfly*, gun-boat on the West African coast, invalided on sick-leave, picked up by a friend's yacht, and landed on an unknown island, where I found the craft that I am now temporarily in command of. If you'll allow me to come on board I'll explain myself more fully."

"Certainly. Come on board by all means, Mr. Wyndham," replied the captain. "According to what you say you ought to have some adventures to tell."

"Yes," said Wyndham, who by this time had got on to the gangway ladder and was mounting slowly with the assistance of one of his own crew. "You must excuse my coming rather slowly for I was wounded again less than a month ago, and am rather shaky still."

"Why on earth didn't you say so, man," exclaimed the captain, as a couple of bluejackets ran down the ladder in obedience to a sign from him. "I could have sent a chair down for you if I had known that."

"Oh, I'm not quite bad enough for that, thanks," said Wyndham, as he accepted an arm from one of the bluejackets, and so arrived safely on the cruiser's deck. From the gangway he was at once taken straight down to the captain's cabin, and there told him all that it was necessary for him to know of the origin and mission of the *Nautilus*.

"And now," he said, in concluding his story. "We are going to run up to Elswick and get our armament on board. It was ordered months ago, and will no doubt be ready for us by the time we get there. When we've got it all on board, and I'm a little stronger we are going out to hunt that blackguard of an Anarchist down. In fact, I'm going to resign my commission in the Navy on purpose to do it."

"I don't think you can do that," said the captain of the cruiser seriously. "At least, from what I have heard of you I feel pretty certain you won't attempt to do so under present circumstances."

"Indeed?" asked Wyndham lifting his eyebrows. "And why not? I hope I wasn't right in guessing, as I almost did when you fired the shot to tell us to heave to, that England's at war."

"Yes, I'm sorry to say we are," replied the captain, "and between you and me I am still more sorry to say we're not prepared for it."

"Oh," said Wyndham, "is that really so? I haven't heard anything about that. Who are we fighting?"

"Russia, at present," replied the captain. "And I'm afraid we shall be at loggerheads with France, too, before very long.

"I suppose you're a good way behindhand with the news now, but you'll remember that, after the compromise that ended the war between China and Japan by giving the Japanese the suzerainty of Corea and the control of the Corean ports, we found it necessary to re-occupy Port Hamilton in order to keep a check on the Russian naval developments in the East.

"Well, for the last year we've been quarrelling about that with Russia, who was very much sold because Lord Salisbury put his foot down and absolutely refused to give her an ice-free port in Corea when the Chino-Japanese quarrel was settled, and matters came to a crisis about a month ago, when the Russians attempted to occupy Port Lazareff by force, and our China Squadron stopped them, also by force.

"They fired on us first, and there was a regular pitched battle, in which the Russians were soundly thrashed. Of course, that could only mean war, and so war it is. France is holding her hand for the present, in spite of the 'arrangement that most people think there is between her and Russia. The moment she draws the sword Germany, Austria, and Italy will join us; and, for my own part, I fancy that she's just waiting, for the present, to see how the cat jumps between us and Russia.

"We've had no actual fighting here yet, but, of course, everyone is on the *qui vive*. The Russian Baltic Fleet will be shut up in the ice until April, and the moment the Black Sea Fleet attempts to force the Dardanelles, Turkey is to join us, and there'll be a general row.

"Meanwhile, we are keeping one eye on Russia, and the other on France, the Mediterranean Squadron is being strengthened every day as fast as we can get the ships into commission, which is precious slowly, I can assure you, thanks to the normal torpidity of the Admiralty; but still, we are

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nolding our own very fairly, and if we only have Russia to tackle, I think we shall be able to confine the war to the sea, and give her a good hammering when the ice breaks up and we get properly to work. By the way, I wish we had a dozen or so craft like that *Nautilus* of yours. Couldn't we get that one into commission and have some more built, don't you think?"

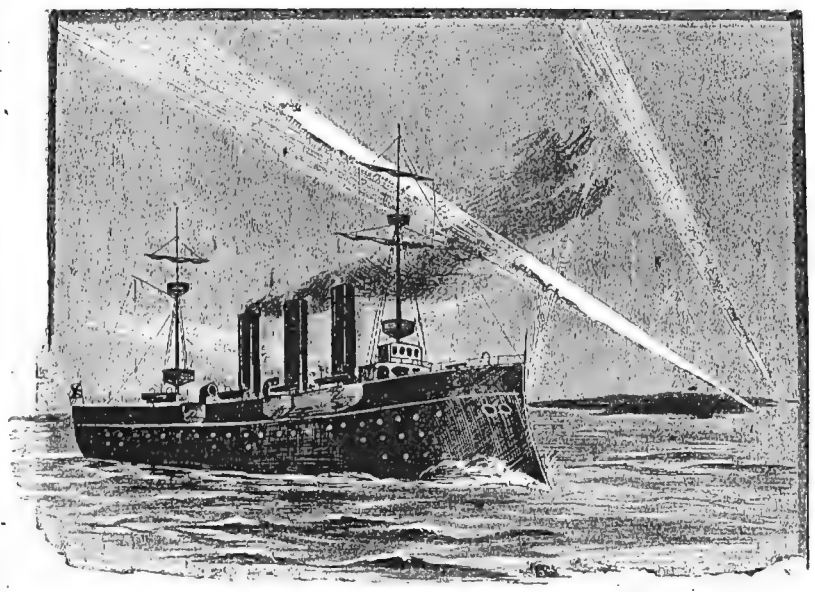
Wyndham was silent for a moment, and then, with a shake of his head, he replied:

"I don't feel altogether sure of that. Of course, as there's war, it will be impossible for me to resign my commission, as I intended to do for private as well as public reasons, and, therefore, if I am ordered on service, when I am fit for it, I shall go; but, you see, the *Nautilus* is private property.

"She's been built outside British jurisdiction by people who own no allegiance to Britian or any other country, and, more than that, she's driven by a motor-power of the composition of which I haven't the faintest notion. In fact, I've given my word of honour not even to ask what it is, and if you had fifty ships like her they'd be very little use to you if you had to drive them by steam-engines in the ordinary way.

"I suppose you thought we were some new-fashioned sort of Russian torpedo ram trying to sneak through and do what damage we could in the narrow waters. Of course, we're nothing like that; but still, I ought to tell you that I am really only a sort of guest on board her, and those who actually do own her may have plans of their own that I should be sorry to interfere with."

"H'm," said the captain. "That makes it a little awkward, doesn't it? Could I see one of these gentlemen, do you think? Perhaps we might be able to come to some arrangement, though, of course, you understand I have no power to treat on behalf of the Government; still, I have some interest at the Admiralty, and I daresay that a report from me might be favourably considered, especially as their lordships seem to be a little bit alarmed by the row that was kicked up when the declaration of war actually came and they weren't able to put three-quarters of the ships into commission."



Signals were being flashed from the outer waters of the Straits.

"If you'll send down and ask Mr. Austen to come on board," said Wyndham, "I think he'll be the best man for you to talk to. He is, well, practically the designer of the *Nautilus*, and I have no doubt his word would go a long way if he chose to give it."

The captain at once rang for an orderly and sent him down to the *Nautilus* with an invitation to Mr. Austen to come on board the cruiser. The invitation was accepted, and within five minutes he was seated at the captain's table. Then a somewhat lengthy conversation ensued; the end of which was that Mr. Austen consented to a report, embodying a description of the *Nautilus*, being laid before the Admiralty, with a proposal that a dozen such vessels might be built at the expense of the country for the purposes of home defence, on condition that they should be furnished with motor fuel by Mr. Austen and his friends, who were to have sole control of the engine-rooms, and that no attempt was to be made to discover what the motor fuel was.

The ships might be commanded by British officers, and used as they thought best, but only for the duration of the war, after that they were to be given up to the Utopians, to be used according to their discretion. These conditions were taken down by the captain of the cruiser to be embodied in his despatch, and then he was invited on board the *Nautilus* and shown over her without reserve. To say that he was amazed at what he saw would hardly be doing justice to his feelings by the time he had seen everything that was shown to him.

"For offensive or defensive purposes," he said, when he at length returned to her saloon and had been introduced to the rest of her company. "I would rather command a craft like this properly equipped than the biggest battleship in the British Navy."

"Yes, I should think you would," said Wyndham, with a laugh. "I know more about her capabilities than you have been able to learn in such a short visit, and I can tell you I should be very sorry for you if you were in command of the *Royal Sovereign* or the *Majestic*, say, and I had the *Nautilus*, and it was my business to send you to the bottom. You wouldn't have a chance against me. You might, perhaps, knock the platform into bits; but the next moment the ram would be into you, and you'd go down like a stone."

"Yes," replied the captain, with a perceptible shudder, "I suppose we should. Forty-four knots an hour did you say you could make? Honestly, you know, that seems to me almost impossible. Why, even that scoundrel who has been terrorising the Atlantic wouldn't be in it in a race with you at that rate, and rumour says he can do nearly forty."

"Nevertheless, it's a fact," replied Wyndham. "We've just travelled over fifteen thousand miles in seventeen days and a half, and if you work that out you'll find that it comes to about forty knots an hour on the average, and if it was only daylight you should see for yourself. Hullo, what's that?"

As he spoke there came the dull boom of a gun out to sea, followed by a rattle of sharper reports. The captain of the cruiser jumped up from his seat at once and made towards the door of the saloon, followed by Wyndham, Sir Harry, Mr. Austen, and Adams.

When they reached the platform they saw search-light beams darting out from a score of points at once, and signals were being flashed inland from the outer waters of the Straits. The captain of the cruiser after one glance round ran up on to the deck of his own vessel and had a hurried consultation with his first officer; then he came to the gangway and called out:

"Now, then, Wyndham, there's a chance for your *Nautilus*. A couple of strange crafts, steaming like the very deuce, are running up under the French land to the north-west. They'll probably run inside the limit so we can't chase them, though our fellows are after them. You can do as you like. Suppose you overhaul them and see what you can make of them. They've got about a twenty-mile start of you now. Do you feel inclined to tackle them?"

"Oh, I'm agreeable, of course," said Wyndham. "What do you say gentlemen?" he continued, turning to Adams and Mr. Austen.

They glanced at each other and nodded.

"Yes," said Adams, "I don't see why you shouldn't, as long as there isn't any unprovoked bloodshed."

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"Oh, of course not," said Wyndham. "I don't suppose you want me to sink them, do you, Captain Andrews?"

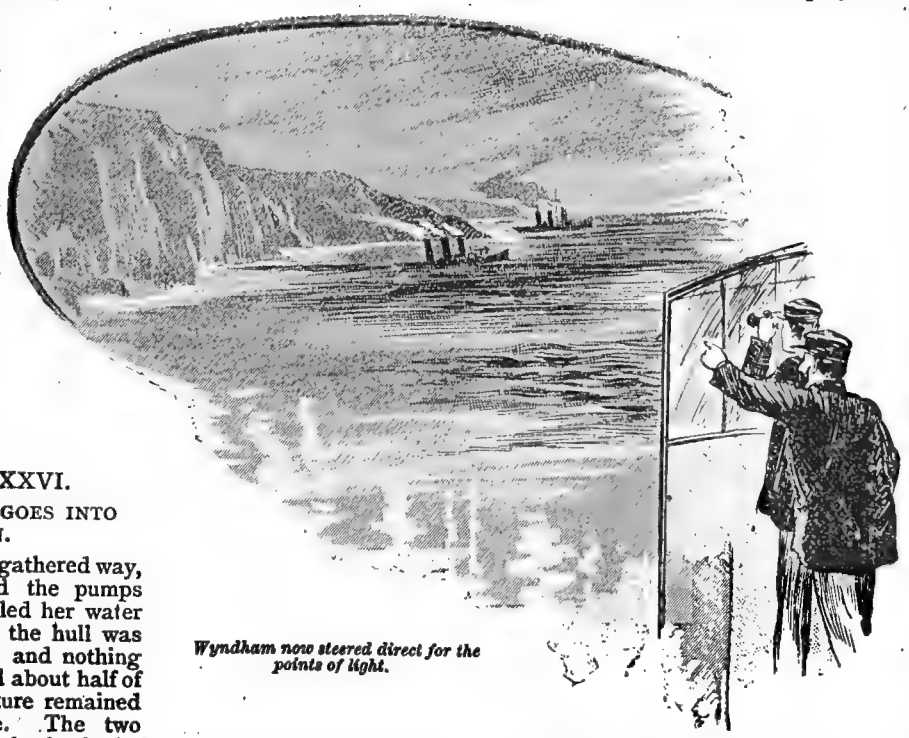
"Well, no, not unless they absolutely refuse to give an account of themselves, and in that case, of course—well, you can just use your own discretion."

"I see," said Wyndham in reply. "We won't hurt them unless we are obliged to. What course shall we steer?"

"You can make it nor'-west by north from where you lie till you make the French land. By that time you'll see the flames from their funnels, I expect, and then, of course, it will only be a question of heels."

"All right. Good-bye. Keep those torpedo boats of yours out of the way," said Wyndham, "because if we hit anything it'll get hurt. Good-bye, I'll bring you news back in an hour or so or else you'll hear something startling in the morning."

The captain waved good-bye from the deck as Wyndham went forward into the conning-tower, accompanied by Adams, who was going to take the wheel for him, while Mr. Austen and Sir Harry disappeared down the after companion-way. Those on board the cruiser heard the companion-slide and the door of the conning-tower shut with a smart snap. Then they heard the muffled tinkling of an electric bell, and the *Nautilus* moved slowly away from the cruiser's side. As soon as she was clear of her and her consorts there was a sound as of rapidly churned-up water, a mass of boiling foam rose astern of the *Nautilus*, two clouds of spray leapt up ahead of her, and the next moment she had vanished into the darkness on her errand of investigation.



Wyndham now steered direct for the points of light.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE NAUTILUS GOES INTO ACTION.

As the *Nautilus* gathered way, the Lieutenant had the pumps set to work and filled her water compartments until the hull was entirely submerged and nothing but the platform and about half of its supporting structure remained above the surface. The two wings of spray which she had thrown up when she started now subsided. The night was calm though cold, and the water rushed away on either side of the swiftly moving platform in long, dark, smooth swirls without a trace of foam either fore or aft.

This was accomplished by means of a device which, in designing the *Nautilus*, Mr. Austen had made use of for the first time in naval architecture. Far forward in the hull, just behind the ram, the plates were pierced with scores of tiny holes arranged along the top and sides of a cylinder, and through these, fine jets of oil were forced, and these, rising to the surface or spreading themselves along the upper sides of the hull, both diminished the skin-friction and prevented the water breaking into foam forward of the platform.

A double advantage was derived from this arrangement. The reduction of skin-friction meant a considerable increase in speed, and the absence of any "bone in her teeth," to use a nautical term, enabled her, as the present expedition clearly proved, to approach close to another craft at night without giving any warning of her presence. Had she been running thus submerged when coming through the Straits, the probability is that she would have got through without anyone being a whit the wiser; but this manœuvre was only intended to be resorted to when in action.

The apparatus for supplying pure oxygen and keeping the air in her interior perfectly fresh was capable of performing its work continuously for twenty-four hours. There were no furnaces or boilers to heat the air or vitiate it with smoke and noxious fumes, and not even Violet, lying on the couch in her cabin fifteen feet below the surface of the water, suffered the slightest inconvenience as the wonderful vessel bore her at a speed of nearly forty-five knots an hour through the depths. In fact, so absolute was the confidence in the strength and capabilities of the *Nautilus* with which her voyage had inspired those on board her, that Violet had point-blank refused to be put on shore at Dover for fear her brother should have felt bound to accompany her, and so would have missed the excitement of the chase. As for any harm coming to them, the idea never even suggested itself.

Within half an hour from the start the plumes of flame from the triple funnels of the two strange craft were distinctly seen from the conning-tower to the north-west under the looming shadow of the French land. Slightly altering the course of the *Nautilus* to the northward, Wyndham now steered direct for the points of light. The hostile torpedo-boats, if such they were, were evidently bound on some important mission, for it was obvious that they were steaming for all they were worth.

Another half hour brought the *Nautilus* close enough to them for Wyndham to see that they were two large torpedo-boats of the class known in the French navy as *torpilleurs de haute mer* and that they were travelling at a speed of over thirty knots an hour. This gave him an advantage of from twelve to fourteen knots, and so the distance between them rapidly decreased. When the chase had lasted for a little over an hour and a half he was within five or six hundred yards of them and dead astern. They still kept on under the land and within the three-mile limit of the French shore which no British vessel could pass for any hostile purpose without a breach of neutrality.

"I'll be hanged if I can make out what those fellows are up to," said Wyndham to Adams when he had reduced speed so as to keep his distance from the torpedo-boats. "They're evidently on some special errand or other, or else they wouldn't be going at such a speed. British they are not, or they wouldn't be over here. If they were French and merely running from one port to another in the ordinary way there would be no reason for all this hurry, because we are not at war with France, and they have just as much right to steam through the Straits as our ships have.

"On the other hand, if they are Russians, how did they get here? They can only have come from a French port or from the Mediterranean; and yet, if they have come from the Mediterranean they must have coaled either at sea or at a French port or they wouldn't have enough coal on board at this time to be steaming at that speed. We can't ram them on mere suspicion of being Russians, so I suppose

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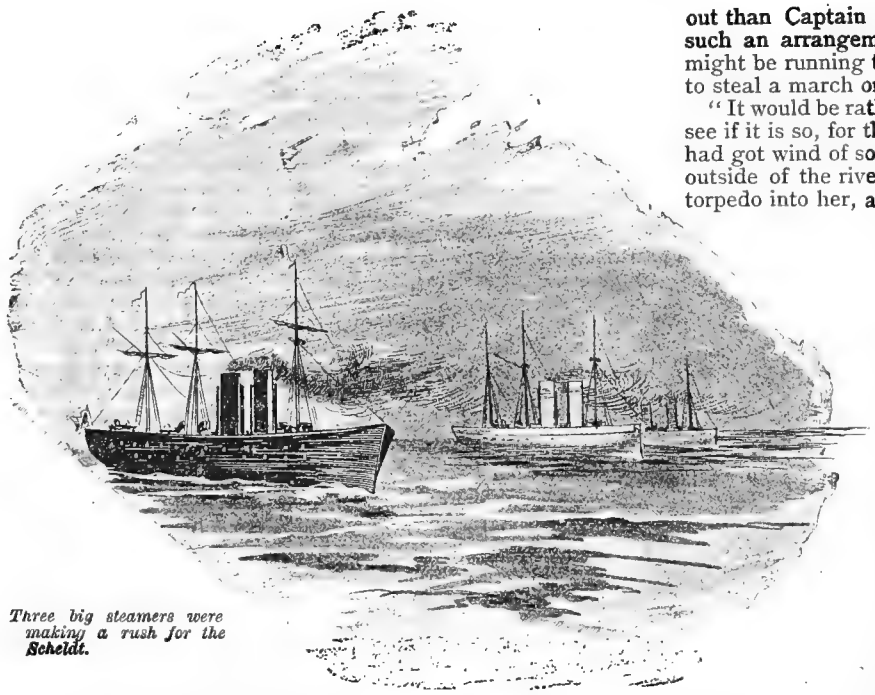

Three big steamers were making a rush for the Scheldt.

there is nothing for it but just to follow them up for the present.

"There are the lights of Dunkirk on the quarter, so in half an hour we shall be outside French waters, then perhaps we shall see what their game really is. Fortunately it is all on our way to the Tyne."

"It looks to me," said Adams, "as though they were either carrying some secret despatches to a fleet in the North Sea or else they're on a raiding expedition somewhere. I don't really see that we can do anything else but watch them."

"No," replied the Lieutenant, "I don't see that we can; but still, I am satisfied that there is some pretty dark game afoot or afloat. They don't seem to turn to the north either. If they mean a rush across to the English coast after sneaking through the Straits in neutral waters they'll make it pretty soon. I'd give something to know what they really are up to."

For two hours more they ran along in the rear of the two boats without seeing anything that gave them any clue to their character or the object of their cruise. This brought them, as nearly as the Lieutenant could calculate, off the mouth of the Scheldt.

A few minutes later they sighted the lightship marking the entrance to the river, and almost at the same instant the two torpedo-boats made a rapid turn and ran out to the eastward in slightly diverging directions. Then the sparks and flames that had been shooting from their funnels disappeared, their speed decreased, and the Lieutenant had to turn the *Nautilus* inland to keep out of sight as he slowed her down.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" he said as he saw the manœuvre of the two boats. "Whatever they are, they have come to watch the entrance to the Scheldt. Now the question is, what are they watching for? Either for something coming in or something going out. It can't very well be anything coming out, unless it's a passenger steamer, and they wouldn't take all this trouble for that."

"Do you think it likely," said Adams, haphazarding a guess, "that Britain has made any secret arrangement with Belgium to garrison Antwerp, as I've often heard she would try to do in case of a war, and——"

"By Jove, I believe you've hit it!" exclaimed Wyndham. "The trouble with France may really be much nearer breaking out than Captain Andrews knew, and it's just possible that such an arrangement has been made, and that our people might be running two or three transports across by night so as to steal a march on the Frenchmen.

"It would be rather a risky move; but, any how, we shall soon see if it is so, for these fellows certainly look as though they had got wind of something of the sort, and mean to patrol the outside of the river mouth to waylay a troopship and shove a torpedo into her, and then get back again into French waters as if they'd never done anything. If that's so, it's a very good job that we followed them, and I think we shall be able to spoil their little game very effectually.

"We'll just run round behind them and get out to sea in front of them. Yes; they're evidently looking for something coming in, or they wouldn't be running out at quarter-speed like that."

The *Nautilus* now made a wide curve round the landward side of the boats and then, keeping well out of sight, put on speed and ran away to sea. When she got out ahead of the boats Wyndham noticed that they showed no lights visible from a vessel bow on to them, and from this he rightly concluded that his surmise was correct, and that they were lying in wait for something coming from seaward. Nor was it very long before he and Adams made out a huge black mass looming dimly against the dark background of sea and sky to eastward. It was showing neither masthead nor side-lights, so evidently its mission was also a secret.

"That's the craft they're looking for," said Wyndham after a long stare through his night-glasses. "I shouldn't be surprised if that's one of the big P. and O. boats being used as a trooper. Those fellows haven't sighted her yet, I think, for they're a good dozen miles behind us. We'll run along and tell that chap what there is ahead of him. Hullo, there's another behind him," he continued as a second black mass loomed up astern of the first one.

In a quarter of an hour the *Nautilus* was alongside of the leading steamer, and Wyndham, throwing open the door of the conning-tower, hailed the deck and rapidly explained the situation to the officer who answered his hail. Adams'

Prisoners of war.

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conjecture proved perfectly correct. War with France was considered to be imminent and liable to break out at any moment. A secret engagement which had long been in force between the Belgian and British Governments was being taken advantage of to put ten thousand British troops into Antwerp, and three big steamers were making a rush for the Scheldt that night.

Secret intelligence of this must have been conveyed by spies to France, and the two torpedo-boats had been sent out to intercept and sink the troopers, if possible, without any one being aware of their fate. It was a desperate move, and in flat defiance of the law of nations; but in practice there could be no doubt that the troops were being conveyed to a neutral country for hostile purposes, and this would go far towards justifying the action of France, provided always that it was successful.

If unsuccessful, the moral effect would be so bad that the Government would probably repudiate all responsibility for the action of the two boats. Wyndham's trained mind saw all this at a glance, and his course of action was immediately taken. He warned the second and the third troopships of their danger, and, as the three slowed down and went at quarter-speed to the northward, he headed the *Nautilus* in for the land again, saying to Adams as he did so:

"There's nothing else for it. We must send those two fellows to the bottom without mercy. They are there to commit a breach of the law of nations and to sacrifice thousands of lives without even the sanction of regular warfare. The *Destroyer* herself has really done nothing worse than that. What do you think?"

"I am afraid I must agree with you," replied Adams gravely. "It seems a terrible thing to do certainly, but it would be infinitely more dreadful to see them sink those steamers with all the thousands on board them."

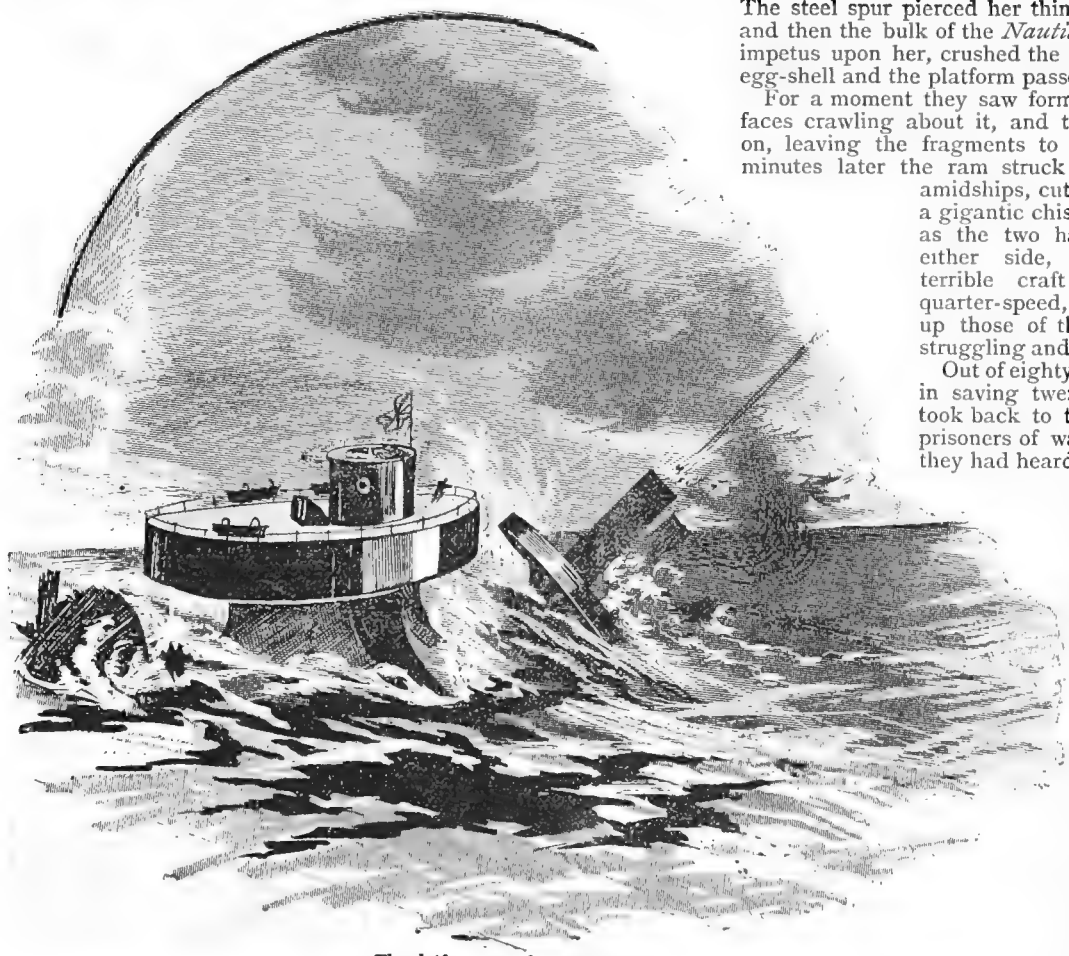
"Yes," said Wyndham. "And if the Frenchmen once catch sight of them they'll send one, at any rate, of them to the bottom, for we can only attend to one torpedo-boat at a time; so we'd better get the business over as soon as possible."

The low platform of the *Nautilus* now began to glide faster and faster over the water, and Wyndham kept her on a curving course towards the land until the two French boats—for such they really were, and bent on the very errand that Adams had guessed—were in line broadside on, and the nearer one was about a mile away. Wyndham signalled for full speed to the engine-room and the *Nautilus* rushed forward towards the unsuspecting enemy.

Not until she was close upon her was she detected by those on board the first torpedo-boat, and then it was too late. The submerged ram went at her with a speed of an express train. The steel spur pierced her thin plates like tissue paper, and then the bulk of the *Nautilus*, hurled with frightful impetus upon her, crushed the flimsily built hull like an egg-shell and the platform passed over the wreck.

For a moment they saw forms of men with agonised faces crawling about it, and then the *Nautilus* swept on, leaving the fragments to sink in the sea. Four minutes later the ram struck the second one square amidships, cut her in two as cleanly as a gigantic chisel might have done, and, as the two halves dropped away on either side, Wyndham swung his terrible craft round, signalled for quarter-speed, and ran back to pick up those of the crews who were still struggling and swimming for their lives.

Out of eighty men they only succeeded in saving twenty-four, and these they took back to the leading troopship as prisoners of war. They confessed that they had heard of the movements of the troopships from spies in England, and had come out to sink them. But whether they had done this by the order, or even with the sanction, of the French Government they flatly refused to tell.



The platform passed over the wreck.

The result of this, the first warlike action of the *Nautilus*, proved to be of immense importance. When France woke up the next morning there were ten thousand British troops in Antwerp. The French press stormed in its usual hysterical fashion, but war was not declared. For the time being, at any rate, the rapid and well-planned move was checkmate in the game that the two Governments were playing.

Of course, all sorts of rumours were soon flying about concerning the exploit of the *Nautilus*, but officially nothing was said on either side. The ram went on her way to Elswick and shipped her guns, torpedo armament, and ammunition, and underwent a thorough overhauling at the hands of Armstrong's most experienced engineers.

Sir Harry, Adams, and Mr. Austen at once applied themselves to the task of getting the various parts of the twenty air-ships into the hands of the different firms who where to construct them, and orders were given at Elswick for the building of another ram on the lines of the *Nautilus*, while that redoubtable craft was taken round to Southampton in readiness to sally forth into the Atlantic on receipt of the first news by ship or

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cable of the appearance of the *Destroyer* on the high seas, or to act as torpedo-boat destroyer and scout in case of an outbreak of hostilities with France, and any attempt on the southern coast.

In this way a month and then two months passed, and still they waited in vain for any sign of the pirate who a few weeks before had been the terror of the Atlantic. She had disappeared as utterly as though a shot from one of the big guns of a battle-ship had blown her out of the water. Liners went to and fro unmolested, and even the air-ship that had given such terrible evidence of its powers had evinced no further sign of its existence.

A series of crushing naval defeats in Eastern waters had shown Russia the folly of measuring her strength afloat with the Power that was still the mistress of the seas. France, isolated by the alliance of Britain, Belgium, Germany, Austria, and Italy, still withheld her hand, chiefly in consequence of the wisdom and strength of President Casimir-Périer, who had set his face like flint against war save in defence of territory, and so the combatants waited until the breaking up of the ice in the Baltic or the forcing of the Dardanelles should enable Russia to make an effort to retrieve in the West the disasters she had sustained in the East.

(To be continued.)

AN ENGINE-DRIVER'S STORY

LINE is a railway family. My father was an engine-driver when I first remembered him, and he stuck to the foot-plate till he was shunted by old age and rheumatism, and ended his days in the most comfortable siding we could make for him. By that time both my brother and I had qualified for men's work—been through the shops, and all that—and Jack, he'd blossomed into a full-blown goods driver, while I held a small stoker's berth.

"We were not working together at the time. I was firing on passenger work with a careful old driver, who'd never hardly had a black mark scored against him in all his time. We used to work a lot of mail trains through between London and Seatown. One night, when it was just time to get out of the shed and take the seven o'clock express, one of the cleaners comes running to me to say, 'Jim, old So-and-so's took suddenly bad, and the doctor says he won't do any more driving for days to come. You'd better see the superintendent.'

"Well, I trots off to the office, and when I got there, to my big surprise, I found the boss talking to my brother Jack. He'd just come in off a journey, and the superintendent was telling him he'd have to work the express through that night. 'Here's your brother,' says he, 'will be with you, and you both of you know the road thoroughly well. You're about the only man on the spot that I can trust, and when I tell you that my own wife and little ones are going down by the seven o'clock you'll see how much confidence I have in you.'

"Now, Jack, he'd never drove an express before, but orders were orders, and we were nearly a minute behind as it was. So off we goes to the shed, Jack putting on the pea-jacket he's just taken off, and shouting to one of the lads to get him a tin bottle of tea and a crust. When we started out we were nearly three minutes over the time, and it was one of those journeys where we had to look lively at ordinary times. We had to pull up those minutes somewhere on the line, and we went in to make the engine do her level best over a bit of straight road when we knew everything would be clear for a run of fifteen miles.

"We had got her up to a speed of over sixty miles an hour. We were fairly flying, and the old lady went leaping along like a greyhound. It's thundering hard work, let me tell you, is firing on a job like that. You'd hardly believe how the coals are gobbled up before you've hardly got them into the furnace.

"And a driver wants just two pairs of eyes and three hands, besides a cool brain to look after his work, let me tell you. It looks easy enough to stand there and hang on to a lever, and just keep your eyes open for signals, but an engine wants just as much humouring as a racehorse; and the quicker you go, the more she wants watching

"Well, Jack had just started the whistle in the usual way as we ran into a tunnel two miles long when a dreadful thing happened. The connecting rod on the right side of the engine broke, and I just heard Jack give one terrific yell as he saw it fly up and inwards, when something seemed to come down upon me like forty thousand tons of pain and blackness, and I knew no more about it. I never heard exactly how it happened, but Jack said that everything seemed to go to pieces in front and around him, and he lost his senses too.

"He woke up presently—it could only have been a second or two—in awful agony, burnt and scalded and almost blind, to find himself lying on the tender, with the flesh all peeled off his hands. And then he remembered how the engine was rushing away to certain smash if he couldn't manage to get to the valve and shut off steam.

"He said afterwards that he could see the whole of the people in the carriages like as in a mental photograph, laughing and chatting and carrying on, unconscious of the danger in front of them; and especially he thought of the superintendent's little yellow-haired chickabiddy and his good-natured wife, cuddling up in each other's arms as we had seen them just before we started.

"How he did it he never could tell, for besides the rest of the damage one of his legs was badly broken; but he crawled down from the top of the coals, right into the blinding steam that kept on escaping from the broken gauge, and shut off the steam and wound down the brake. There was no Westinghouse then, and all we'd got was the old-fashioned style of thing.

"When the front guard jumped out to see what was the matter, he found that Jack had fallen insensible in the six-foot way. As for me, they picked me up nearly a mile back of where the train came to a stand, and the pair of us were taken away to the nearest house, while the guard went to the next signal-box and got them to telegraph for help.

"It was many a weary week before I was able to get about; and poor Jack, he lay between life and death for weeks longer. But he pulled through, and I must say that all the time we lay bad nobody could have been kinder than the officials of the company. As soon as we could go they sent us down to Seatown, and there we lived like fighting-cocks till we were on the upward grade again.

"At last, when we were just beginning to go for short walks together and pick up a bit, there came a sudden message that we were wanted at a meeting in the Assembly Rooms, and off we toddled, wondering what it could be about. When we got there, the room was nearly full of gentlefolks, and there was the chairman of the line and the mayor of the town on the platform, and a whole crowd of directors and other swells around them, with our superintendent and his wife and daughter. As soon as we entered there was such a hooray as you never heard before, and we were pushed along to the

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platform and helped up the steps before we'd time to ask a question. Then they gave us a seat each, and the chairman of the line he got up to speak.

"Well, to cut it short, it turned out there'd been a collection made, and there was a gold watch and chain for Jack on the table, and a silver ditto for me, and a nice new silk purse chock full of sovereigns for my brother, and a crisp ten-pound note for yours truly.

"Then Jack, he gets up and rubs the tears away with his sleeve, and he lifts up the child and kisses her. But he wouldn't take the money. Instead of that, he takes hold of one ringlet of her pretty hair, and says, quite quiet like, 'Can I have this instead, ma'am?'

"And the superintendent's wife, she says, 'To be sure you can!'

"And then they cheered again and again, till you'd have thought the roof would split, and Jack and me were driven home to our lodgings in the mayor's carriage, and there was no end of a to-do. And when we were well enough there was a big dinner in Jack's honour amongst the publicans of the town, and another from the Aquarium people, and free tickets for us to everything in the place; and the ladies were sending him presents of books, and a harmonium, and all kinds of nice things, till you couldn't rest until the nine days' wonder was over. And then they forgot us just as punctually as they always do in such cases.

"Did I refuse to take my ten-pound note? What do *you* think? No. I always admired Jack, both before and since those times; but, if ever there was a soft-hearted fool—well, no matter. We're not all made of the same metal, you see; and p'rhaps it's as well we're not. It's all over and done with now."

BON GARÇON

HERE is a little corner in Southern Italy where Arcady still lingers. Once I was in the habit of spending every spring there, but I shall never go again. Yet it is to me the most beautiful place in the world.

One lands at the Marina and climbs the hill winding up, up, the long, white highroad, which is like a shelf along the edge of the cliff. High above one's head hangs the mountain, leaning forward stark and grim; below the wall of the road the ground falls sheer away to the sea. One sees nothing but the great, shining plain and the threatening mountain.

Round and round curves the road between those two silent, watching enemies, till suddenly, without any warning, one reaches the plateau and comes out in a land of desire. It is only to climb a wall and then to walk onward without let or hindrance through the wheat-fields, under the olives, where the young green wheat-blades are like swords for keenness, and their colour strikes on the soul like a song too sweet for words, and yet brave withal.

And below the wheat on the lower terraces are the bean-fields, sweet and heavy, where a man may lie full length on the short grass of the thread-like paths and feel nothing but the warm odours, the little winds over the blossoms, be conscious of nothing but the glory of the wheat, the flickering shades of the gnarled olives in the afternoon light, and, if he lies still enough, the sound of the nightingale learning its song. And yet he may be sick at heart.

As I lay there the livelong April day, neither reading nor thinking, nor grateful to God for His wind and fields of wheat, but with my fingers in my ears to shut out the sound of the nightingale's song. For, instead of a young springtide, I saw nothing but a woman in white from head to feet, with bare arms and shoulders, a wreath of brown winter ivy round her golden head, and a great garland of it on her gown.

There she stood and looked at me with a straight, grave glance—not the look she gave me as a rule; I found that out soon enough, for if ever there was a coquette it was she—Suzon. I used to watch her often as she talked to men with that quick grace she had, and being used to analysing faces—it is my profession, for that matter, I who am a doctor—I saw that she, whom most women hated for her lovers, whom most men adored and thought a soft, warm plaything, a true woman, was in reality as cold as a stone image.

It was a pretty play that went on around her, with often a change in the *jeune premier*, but she did not act in it herself. She piped carelessly, and all her court danced, but she neither grew warm nor weary.

I am not sure how I came to be so friendly with her; I think she began it. I am sure I should not have presumed. But we fell into a way of walking over the hills together and sitting on the cliffs in the noondays, looking out over a sea like to the glory of God for light and colour, talking of many things sometimes, sometimes silent, lying in the sun—I with my hat over my eyes, drinking in the scenes of the spring air, just seeing the splendour of a bush of yellow broom standing out against a violent sea; she with her head flung back on the short dry grasses, often with a cigarette in her mouth.

As the days went by we grew quietly nearer one another—insensibly, till one evening I asked her something.

The fact was, all the place was ringing with her doings. The men with whom she had amused herself for a time, not all being gentlemen, handled her name in the *cafés* without too much courtesy. And the women had always hated her for her beauty, her toilets, her artistic reputation. Young as she was, she had had a mention at the Salon.

So I asked her if it really amused her enough to be worth the price.

She shook her head.

When she was not painting she grew horribly *ennui*; she must do something. And then it was not all her fault, she said.

"It is to a great extent," I told her. "You lead men on horribly. As soon as they make love to you they disgust you. You fling them over none too gently, and, well—they talk."

She nodded. I fancy she knew quite well what sort of reputation she had. But presently she said with amusement:

"So you do not care about me, do you?"

"I like you so much that I do not care to have them speak of you as they do. You are always *bon garçon* to me," I cried, turning sharply on her. "Why cannot you translate it literally, and be a 'good boy' always? Drop your coquetry, take life frankly; you would do better."

She did not answer.

The sun was hot, she began to look tired and said she had work to do, and must go home. I thought she did not like what I had said. But I walked to her villa with her, and as I stood in the loggia and bade her good-bye, she put her hand into mine.

Something prompting me, I said very low:

"Be a good boy."

She looked me in the face.

"I will," she said, as though she were making a vow.

And she did, I know, for I never again saw in her that light manner which I had always disliked; I never again heard her talking to men as I had heard her often enough.

And we were rather more together than ever. She would

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not let me treat her as a woman; she was the only woman I ever knew who knew the meaning of *camaraderie*.

But my relation to her was getting all pose, and I knew it.

"*Mon camarade, mon beau garçon*, my friend," I said to her; in my soul I called her, "*Mon rose blonde, ma cherie.*"

I made up my mind to go away; it was all I could do. She knew nothing about my wife, and of course I knew I must tell her.

So one very windy, unpleasant day, as we were sitting in a little sheltered cove on the shore, I screwed my courage to the sticking point and told her I must go to Rome.

I had had a very tiresome letter and was out of tune, like the day, and I did not say it nicely.

"Why do you go?" she asked, looking at me where she sat, close against the eternal rock, the glorious strong sea crashing and foaming at her very feet.

I threw a stone into the water and waited to see where it fell. Then I said, quite steadily—

"Because there is no use in my staying."

"Certainly not; since you are well enough to go back," she assented (for I go to my Arcady, because I do not sleep in Rome). Yet I knew she had understood me.

She threw a stone into an incoming wave in her turn, then she spoke slowly and carefully:

"Are you going back to your wife?" she asked.

"Who told you?" said I, not having voice for more.

"The princess, I think. The morning you came into the studio and she was there."

I seldom entered Suzon's house. One morning I had gone to ask her about photographing a picture, I remembered, and Princess Mathilde was there.

"What did she say?" I asked.

"Precisely? She said what a handsome man you were, and what a sad story yours was."

"Ah!" I said stupidly.

"Where is your wife?" Suzon spoke with careful civility. "I suppose you will join her in Rome?"

"My wife, mademoiselle, suffers from incurable homicidal mania."

"I beg your pardon," said my comrade softly, and held out her hand.

I took it as it was offered, and let it go again.

She did not ask me any more, nor did I tell her. Of what use was it to say that three times had that woman tried to murder me when crazed by drink, till her own people had had her shut up? Or why should I say to my *bon garçon* that I had only that day received a letter from the doctor at the asylum, telling me that my wife had escaped, and he did not know where she was; could I tell him of any haunt in which she was likely to be found?

I saw no sense in telling all this to Suzon. When a man at the age of twenty-three marries a woman thirteen years older, and finds out soon after that, besides being addicted to drinking, she is of unsound mind and makes festive attempts to murder him, she and her doings are not a subject on which he is likely to dwell. So I held my tongue.

I never thought she could find me out in my present land, though she had been there once with me long ago. I never thought that, in her mad hatred, she would remember how I invariably spent the spring months there after my winter's work. But I fancied I should find her in Rome.

"What are you going to do?" I asked Suzon.

"Work," she said quietly.

She never spoke of it, but I knew she painted for her bread, and that she had no idea of saving money, but lived from hand to mouth. So I was anxious about her. I could not trust myself to think about it. I would keep *au courant* with her doings; that was all I could do for her, though I knew she was horribly poor, and the life of a beautiful woman in Paris is not easy in that case.

"We will have one more walk before I go," I said to Suzon, and she said "Yes."

So the next day we walked up the terraced high road, up and up till we reached the olives and the wheat, and then the bean-fields, and, wandering on at our own sweet wills, were happy and innocent.

We sat down at last on the long grass at the edge of the cliff overhanging the sea, where a little wind came up to us.

We did not speak of this being our last day; we talked as usual, comrade to comrade, while a nightingale somewhere about kept trying his voice in broken ecstasies.

It was like heaven.

I lay on the grass; Suzon, not far off, read Leopardi aloud. Why she chose that philosophy of despair, she who had still some joy in life, I do not know. But presently I ceased to hear her voice. I do not sleep at night, and, like all people who have insomnia, am utterly unable sometimes to keep from falling into a deep sleep, especially in the open air.

And so I did that day. And while I slept that woman must have been creeping up to us. For I started, dazed, from my sleep to see Suzon struggling in the grasp of a mad woman on the very verge of the cliff!

Of course I knew who it was. I was on my feet like a flash, but not in time; for before I could reach her, I saw my comrade flung out over that awful height.

Then two men who had been working in the fields came running and caught my wife. I did not wait to hear them tell how they had seen her creep up to me, not seeing I was not alone; how, just as she held the knife at my back, Suzon had leaped like a cat and caught it from her hand, and how my wife had turned on her. All that I heard afterwards. Now I ran down that zigzag path to the shore and knelt by my little comrade.

I thought she was dead, for nearly every bone in her body was broken and her eyes were closed in stupor. I groped for her heart with my hand (I who had never touched her). She was alive, for I felt it stir, and then she opened her eyes and looked at me.

She knew me, but she did not, I think, remember where she was or what had happened. The poor lips tried to speak and failed.

"Try again, my darling!" I cried. "Tell me, are you in pain?" though I did not think she was, for her back was broken.

"Say it again," she whispered.

"What?" I wondered.

In despair I called her by every name I had for her, and had never used except to my own soul.

"My darling, my love!"

"What you said—I always was—to you," she gasped fretfully.

"My comrade, *mon bon garçon*," I said, hardly able to get the words out.

"*Bon gar*——"

The murmur died in her throat and her eyes closed. Presently I could no longer feel her heart. When I knew she was dead I took her in my arms and carried her up to the little plateau, full of wondering peasants, where the gendarmes were taking away my wife. But I did not see them; I went straight to her house, and laid her gently on her bed.

It is two years since then. My wife is shut up once more, safely watched now that it does not matter.

I am at my work. Sometimes I am so tired that I can hardly undress at night—actually too tired to sleep.

But this spring I longed so for my old Arcady that I came in spite of myself. It is all the same, all—yet to-day I lay face downward in the fields, and if I lifted my head I could not see the young wheat for tears.

HOW TO SUCCEED.

Under this title a most interesting and instructive series of articles has just been commenced in the columns of *PEARSON'S WEEKLY*. The series will embrace the opinions of the editors of the chief trade papers on the all-important subject of "Success in Business and How Best it can be Obtained." Each trade will be taken in turn, and some most valuable advice will be given by men of life-long experience. Articles upon the following trades are already in hand: Grocer, Butcher, Tailor, Saddler, Dairyman, Publican, Newsagent, Tobacconist, Laundryman, Hosier and Glover.

PEARSON'S WEEKLY, ONE PENNY. EVERY SATURDAY.

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AFTER dinner at the First Avenue Hotel, we retired to a cosy corner of the smoking room, my newly made American acquaintance and I.

"To resume the subject we were discussing at the table," he began, "let me give you an instance that came across my notice some years ago.

"It wasn't the first affair of honour that I had had to do with in one way and another, but not even the first had unnerved me like this did.

"My friend, Paul Graham, was a young lawyer. We had played together in infancy and we were chums at college. We spent our vacations together, shooting and fishing.

"More than once I had heard him declare that in his opinion duelling was morally and socially wrong. Once I asked him:

"'Would you refuse a challenge?'

"'I shall never send one,' he answered, 'and it would be cowardice in me to accept one.'

"'But——'

"'I have not answered the question, you are about to object. I cannot answer it in a word. If I ever accept a challenge it will be for the simple reason that I am afraid of what people would think and say.'

"All this I remembered when the affair with William Cuthbert came up. Graham sent for me. I knew he would. There was little to say, except that Cuthbert's friend, Milam, had called upon him, Graham, that afternoon.

"'There is only one thing for me to do. Will you carry my answer?' he said.

"It did look cold-blooded. This man was—well, he was sacrificing himself. Cuthbert was a crack shot and had killed his man. Graham was a miserably poor shot and a novice.

"'Will you carry my answer?'

"'On condition that you consent to my arrangements as to the distance, and that you promise me, upon your honour as a gentleman, to shoot to kill.'

"'Do as you please.'

"'Good. Well, thank Commodore Decatur for the suggestion, and make the most of it. And promise me that you will kill him if you can.'

"He shook his head.

"'You know what I believe about these matters. I shall not try to hit him in any event. If I killed him it would be murder.'

"'Idiot! And what would it be if he killed you?'

"'Murder.'

"Of course, I refused to have anything to do with the matter. In fact I came near going to Cuthbert and explaining the situation fully in gross violation of confidence. I didn't know what to do, and finally did nothing but lose some sleep over it. I even refused to go as surgeon; but consented reluctantly when Graham insisted.

"His second was an ass named Morrow—a consummate ass! He agreed to ten paces, when he might have known that Cuthbert's being disconcerted—as the British officer was by Decatur's arrangement in behalf of the midshipman, by bringing the principals together—was Graham's only chance.

"For many reasons then, I was low-spirited that morning. Our ride was as solemn as a funeral procession.

"Cuthbert and his friends had just reached the grounds when we arrived.

"No time was lost in making ready. Graham's second lost the toss for position, of course. Even yet the thought of that—but my opinion of Morrow, beyond question the most addle-pated of imbeciles, is not material to the narrative. He lost the toss. That much is relevant. I never lost the toss in my life. Never!

"'One—two——!'

"Then a very irregular and somewhat dramatic thing happened. Graham raised his left hand, meaning that a halt must be made for some reason. Was it, could it be cowardice? Was he afraid to be shot at? In an instant I knew better, because I knew him so well, but the others didn't.

"'Jim,' he said, without moving from his tracks, 'come here a second.'

"Cuthbert and Milam bowed their consent.

"I went to Graham's side. In a perfectly steady voice he asked for a piece of paper. As I tore a page from a small notebook he put his pistol carefully under his left arm and drew a pencil from his pocket. He scribbled a few words and then folded the paper.

"'Keep that,' he said to me.

"I drew aside, thinking less about this singular interruption than about Graham's manner. There was absolutely no trace of faltering. His face was firm. But something in his very deliberation and coolness was wrong—a stiffness, a sort of paralysis that could not be defined. His movements had a mechanical, an automatic appearance.

"'I am very sorry to have been obliged to interrupt,' said Graham quietly. 'I am quite ready now. You had counted two.'

"'Three—fire!'

"My friend drew his hand to his breast at the report of Cuthbert's pistol and came near falling. He steadied himself grandly and fired without aim, at random. Then he fell.

"I cut open his shirt, and saw at once that the wound was very serious—not necessarily fatal, so far as a superficial examination showed, but with the chances against recovery.

"'You'd better get over the line,' I said to Cuthbert. 'He is likely to die.'

"Graham revived a bit, and tried to whisper my name.

"Brusqueness is a characteristic of mine; frankness is another. On this exceptional occasion I was reasonably smooth spoken, and I lied to my patient. I told him that he was in no real danger.

"'Cuthbert?' he questioned in a barely audible tone as I leaned over him.

"'Why,' said I, 'there he is.'

"'Is he hurt?'

"'No. Can't you see him right over my shoulder?'

"'I—I was afraid—I might—might have hit him.'

"Then for the first time I looked closely into Graham's eyes. They were blank, sightless. I remembered the case of his father, remarkable from a professional standpoint, who was suddenly stricken with blindness. This had happened to the wounded man.

"Suddenly, I thought of the note he had given me. It was the single sentence:

"'I am blind.'

"And yet they thought this man had hesitated through fear! They had sneered at his awkwardness!

"'Jim,' he said earnestly, though still in a broken whisper, 'if God spares my life I shall go to preaching, and I'll stop duelling, disgrace or no disgrace.'

"He kept his word, as he always did. His first convert to the Anti-Duelling League was William Cuthbert."

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Should Stout Persons STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever, which was, perhaps, indirectly responsible for the untimely end, in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeeds only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic trouble which will be difficult to overcome.

The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite be appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, takes a different course. He says, "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2 lb. to 12 lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning, but on the contrary he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get this book, the price of which is only 4d. It is entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pp., and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It can be had direct, or through any bookseller.—*The Million.*

A POSITIVE REMEDY FOR CORPULENCE

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is a cheap issue (only 4d.) published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes:—"Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for, in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid:—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos—*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes:—'So far (six weeks from commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes:—'I am just half the size.' A fourth:—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes:—'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes:—"I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says:—"It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says:—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee that you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

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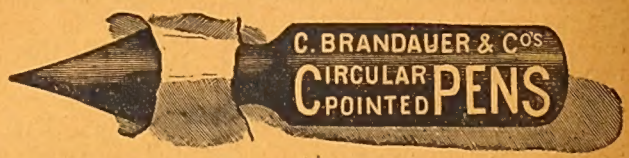

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